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Imagine Making the Best Behavior Choices:
Teaching Language, Analysis & Self-Monitoring Skills for Thoughtful Interactions
Herb Hein, MMSc, CCC-SLP
Hein Speech-Language Pathology, Inc
Herb@HeinSLPinc.com / www.HeinSLPinc.com

Effective Approaches for Guiding Prosocial Behavior Choices

Explicit instruction can guide individuals to consider the needs of others while also considering their own needs. In addition to benefiting from practice opportunities and positive reinforcement for target behavior, students can learn to make better interaction choices through the following teaching approaches:

1. Provide personalized, explicit instruction of the language involved in **prosocial** behavior.
2. Use language that fosters awareness that we are on Teams, striving to meet **Common Team Goals**.
3. Use color coding & other visual strategies to guide students to **analyze** situations & **perceive**, retain, and recall the better behavior choices.
4. Guide the process of choosing and acting upon personally relevant **prosocial** thoughts, providing reinforcement for such actions.
5. Guide students to develop **Personal Goals** and track their **transformations** towards **positive** behavior.

1. Evidence for the benefit of providing personalized, explicit instruction:

The work of author-educator **Anita Archer, Ph.D.**, a proponent of the importance of explicit instruction in the field of education, has shown the benefits of:

- Providing systematic, direct, engaging, and success-oriented instruction
- Modeling the behavior to be taught before expecting students to perform successfully

The work of child psychologist and author, **Ross Greene., Ph.D.**, developer of an intervention called "Collaborative Problem Solving" (now called "Collaborative & Proactive Solutions"), has shown:

- Students are "lagging" in displaying lower developmental levels in some basic skills that affect their interactions.
- If they could they would! With direct instruction of these skills, these students could act differently.

How to provide personalized, explicit instruction of the language needed for positive social interactions

- Define any unfamiliar vocabulary
- Clearly explain all concepts & provide relevant examples, including the reason for certain rules
- Provide choices of behavior with clear associations to the resulting **positive** vs. **negative** consequences
- Provide explicit instruction of what to think, say and do when making a **prosocial** choice. This allows participants to feel confident and successful, knowing exactly what to say in situations. This will help them understand and take the targeted, pro-social action.
 - Include modeling how to politely say "I don't understand", or "I don't know what to do now," and reinforce students for asserting themselves in this manner.

2. Evidence for making better interaction choices, working together as a Team, and using Team language to meet Common Team Goals

The work of child psychologist and author, **Ross Greene., Ph.D.**, has shown:

- We benefit from using the language in which we are all working together as a Team.
- In order to be effective in solving interaction problems, we need to listen to each other and respect each other's feelings and ideas, so we can collaborate as a team and solve the problem together.

3. Evidence for improving the ability to analyze situations and retain our better behavior choices with color-coding and visual strategies

The work of **Leah Kuypers, OTR**, and her **ZONES of Regulation** program, has shown:

- Students can better determine how they feel by using the program's color-coded approach and common language.

The work of **Linda Hodgdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP** and Autism consultant, has shown:

- Visual strategies help individuals organize their thinking and understand communication better.
- There is evidence of the efficacy of using visual strategies, especially with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as they tend to be visual learners.

4. Evidence for the benefit of practicing the use of **pro-social** thoughts, taking **prosocial** actions, and getting reinforced for **positive** interactions:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is effective in helping people improve their behavior and feelings by helping them **change** their thoughts.

- Thoughts, feelings and behavior can be visualized as a triangle with each part affecting the others.
- We have the **power to change** what we are thinking in a situation. This will result in **positive** changes in how we feel and how we act.

The Process Involved in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy:

1. We guide students to be **thoughtful** instead of **impulsive**, considering alternative, **prosocial** thoughts.
2. Students practice taking **positive** action and using words based upon these **positive** thoughts.
3. Students get positively reinforced for these **positive** actions.
4. Students begin to associate these **positive** thoughts with **positive** feelings, remembering the **positive** consequences of their actions.
5. As **positive** behavior is reinforced, students are more likely to choose to initiate it in less structured situations.

5. Evidence for the effectiveness of focusing on increasing personal responsibility for making **positive** behavior transformations

Matthew McKay, Ph.D., Peter D. Rogers, Ph.D., and Judith McKay, RN in their book, *When Anger Hurts, Quieting the Storm Within*, guide individuals to notice, take charge of, and change their own maladaptive behaviors.

Key concepts:

1. Increasing personal responsibility for actions allows for improved behavior
2. We can learn strategies for helping combat "trigger thoughts"
3. Healthy self-talk is a strategy that works
4. Improved self-awareness and self-control can stop the escalation of maladaptive behaviors

Lessons and strategies from the **Growing G.R.E.E.N. InterActions Social Literacy Program** combine the above-noted approaches to meet the social language goals of students. Let's see how the language, analysis skills, and self-monitoring needed for thoughtful interactions can be taught:

1. Provide explicit social language instruction, using color-coded language to differentiate among social interaction behaviors.

- What does it mean to act **G.R.E.E.N.?** (**G**rateful, **R**espectful, **E**mpathetic, **E**asygoing and **N**avigating)
- Learn to **feel green**, then learn the language for the thoughts, scripts and strategies to **act G.R.E.E.N.**
- What does it mean to act **R.E.D.?** **R**ude **E**gocentric, **D**isruptive
- We can learn to **perceive** and **analyze** behavior in others and in ourselves, and, when **R.E.D.** behavior is perceived, **change** the scene to make it **G.R.E.E.N.** by making **transformations**.
- We can use language and strategies to **self-calm** and then use the language in our best **Guiding G.R.E.E.N. Thoughts®** to take **G.R.E.E.N.** action.

2. We are on Teams! We use Team language and follow Team rules to meet **Common Team Goals**

- **We** are part of many Teams: a Home Team, Classroom Team, Friendship Team, Work Team, Conversation Team.
- **We** discuss and collaborate on:
 - naming and choosing our **Common Team Goals**. Typical **Common Team Goals** are explicitly provided to help us choose the ones that are most relevant. Everyone participates so everyone has a "buy in" and can benefit from the **Common Team Goals**.
 - determining the Team Rules that will help us feel safe and respected together, so we can cooperate easily. Again, everyone participates, so everyone has a "buy in."
- **We** use Team-centric language, frequently talking about what we can do to support each other. We do our best to avoid talking about **me** vs. **you**. This helps students feel the support of their peers and staff.
- Everyone in the situation can use Team-centric language to help achieve **Common Team Goals**.
- **We** choose **our** words and **our** actions to meet **Common Team Goals**. We think, "Will this action help the Team move **forward** toward reaching its goals?"

- Scripts are presented that model how both the parent and child or the teacher and student take **G.R.E.E.N.** action, using **G.R.E.E.N.** words to experience the **positive** consequence of everyone working together to meet the **Common Team Goal**.

3. Guide the analysis of situations to determine if a behavior **helped** or **hindered** the Team. Explicitly teach students how to:

- **Survey the scene** and **analyze** the social situation
- Find clues to guess what people want and need
- See if an action is **G.R.E.E.N.** or **R.E.D.** Color-code the words and behaviors we are reading about or talking about
- Consider both **negative** and **positive** consequences
- Analyze whether their own behavior is **G.R.E.E.N.** or **R.E.D.** Analyzing and color-coding the behavior they read about helps them start to differentiate the behavior they are experiencing in their own life scenes.
- Methodically analyze choices to see which one is **better** for themselves and their Team

4. Provide and encourage the use of personally relevant guiding thoughts and reinforce exhibited **positive** action

Teach students that since they are human beings, they have the **power** to use specific thoughts to guide their actions. They are assisted in selecting a thought that has the language they need to guide their action "in the moment". They get to choose the best **Guiding G.R.E.E.N. Thought** that characters in printed scenarios can use. Then students can learn to choose the best thoughts for themselves in their real-life situations.

Provide students with explicit, extrinsic reinforcement for their **prosocial** behavior. They learn what behavior is considered to be **G.R.E.E.N.** through the **positive** consequence of being rewarded with **G.R.E.E.N.** Token Trackers and **G.R.E.E.N.** Action Reports. Students gradually choose to act **G.R.E.E.N.** for the intrinsic reinforcement of knowing their actions benefited themselves and their Team.

5. Develop personal responsibility for setting, acting upon, and tracking **Personal Goals**.

We guide students to choose **Personal Goals** that help them have **better** InterActions with others on their Teams. In establishing realistic, measurable **Personal Goals**, they are naming the specific social behavior that they can begin to self-monitor and improve. By periodically taking the time to stop and evaluate their own behavior, they learn to be metacognitive, thinking more about their personal responsibility to make **better** choices to achieve their **Personal Goals**. Many students are motivated by tracking their own progress. In thinking more frequently about their thinking and their actions, they increase the likelihood that they will think their new **positive, pro-social** thoughts and take their new **prosocial** actions as needed "in the moment".

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